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Islam's adaptation to the West: on the deconstruction and reconstruction of religion

Hendrik M. Vroom

Faculty of Theology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam,
The Netherlands
Hm.vroom@mdw.vu.nl

Abstract

This article describes the process of the deconstruction and reconstruction of Islam in its transition from an Islamic to a Western culture, and does so from a hermeneutical perspective. In this process of reinterpretation of tradition 'Western' Muslims have a number of options: traditionalism, moderate orthodoxy, fundamentalism, radicalism and religious liberalism. On the basis of the process of change in orthodox Reformed churches in the last part of the twentieth century, I describe the process of change among Muslims who have to find a way in Western Europe. This process of reinterpretation in such a different context necessarily triggers off a discussion of the principles of *fiqh* and the right understanding of the Qur'an and *hadith*. In this discussion the 'options' mentioned arise. This hermeneutical analysis adds theological insights to processes of change and conflict that often are analysed only in terms of social-economic processes, and can help to understand the developments also from a theological perspective.

Introduction

In this article I will describe the process of the deconstruction and reconstruction of Islam in its transition from an Islamic to a Western culture, and will do so from the perspective of how 'Western' Muslims understand the sources of Islam: the Qur'an and the *shari'ah*. In this process of change Muslims have a number of options: traditionalism, moderate orthodoxy, fundamentalism, radicalism and religious liberalism, terms which are borrowed partly from Christianity. Religious traditions with sacred texts display certain similarities when involved in the process of change. On the basis of my knowledge of the process of change in Reformed and free Reformed churches (in particular in the Netherlands), I will describe the process of change among Muslims who have moved to Western Europe from Islamic countries and have given a 'European' form to Islam. Much has been written about fundamentalism and Islamic radicalism as well as about Western Islam. I will approach this topic from the perspective of religious hermeneutics: the study of the process of understanding a sacred text – in this case, the Qur'an. On that basis we can

explain why the adaptation of Islam to 'the West' leads to internal discussions on the nature of the authority of the Qur'an and show what options Muslims have. The internal Islamic discussions can become heated, for they concern the meaning of life and the sincerity of one's *islam*, i.e. the surrender in faith and obedience. In this hermeneutical analysis of finding new or other sources for 'Islam' I will use a number of concepts that are borrowed from the descriptions of the development of the process of change in understanding the Bible in orthodox Reformed theology in the second half of the twentieth century.¹

Religion in a homogeneous culture

Arabic and European countries had, until recently, relatively homogeneous cultures. This has changed and is changing rapidly, both in Europe and in Arabic countries, even though these changes do not occur in the same way.² In a religiously homogeneous culture, the large majority of the population belong to a specific religion.³ In the Netherlands, Belgium and Scotland that was Christianity; in the Netherlands north of the major rivers the majority was Reformed, and south of the Rhine, in Belgium and in France, Roman Catholic. In England it was the Anglican Church. Three different approaches could be found in the Protestant churches, which can be schematically indicated as *conservative-orthodox*, *moderate orthodox* and *liberal*. Through this threefold division runs another threefold division: *pietistic*, *moralistic* and *intellectualistic*. The conservative-orthodox churches often kept somewhat apart from the broader social context, particularly in free churches.⁴ The moderate orthodox allow much more of a contextual interpretation of the Bible but run the risk of a certain looseness in which the

¹ Cf. Hendrik Vroom, 'Scripture Read and Interpreted: The Development of the Doctrine of Scripture and Hermeneutics in *Gereformeerde* Theology in the Netherlands', *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993), pp. 352–71; *De Schrift alleen?* (Scripture Alone?), 2nd edn (Kampen: Kok, 1979).

² Olivier Roy points out correctly that the Arabic countries are also caught up in an intense process of change because of globalization. Cf. his *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst, 2004) on re-Islamization in countries around the Mediterranean Sea and governmental measures with respect to Islam.

³ People can give very divergent forms to their 'belonging to a tradition'; cf. the phenomenon of 'believing without belonging'.

⁴ Well-known examples of isolationism are the Rechabites (Jeremiah 35), the Amish and various sects. In connection with fundamentalism Sivan speaks of an enclave culture, but I think that we should distinguish between pietistic-conservative traditionalism and fundamentalism. Cf. below and Semin as the author of the first chapter of Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 23–89.

binding factor is found not in faith as it is experienced but in bureaucracy and moralism.⁵ Liberalism runs the risk of intellectualism and moralism as well, but it also includes pietistic movements within it. All these approaches existed until recently within Christian culture and after the Second World War underwent relatively deep changes. Especially for the moderate orthodox the changes were radical: from a scholastic approach to less sharply defined faith, from a tightly circumscribed faith content and patriarchal culture to the emancipation of women and, later on, in some churches, of homosexuals, different views on evolution and creation, race relations, war and peace and, closely connected with this, the nature of the authority of scripture. Together, these issues have introduced great tension into the churches and caused much strife. In conservative-orthodox circles this process is not over by a long shot and in some circles it is just beginning – this is not to say that the process will follow the same route and arrive at the same result.

Such a process of change rests on impulses from the context that force people to doubt old, familiar truths. This doubt is crucial for understanding the emergence of this (schematic) threefold division.⁶ One can ‘conquer’ such doubt only by clinging to those truths, reinterpreting them or casting them aside. Reinterpretation means a re-evaluation of the sources of faith, i.e. the Bible is reread and applied in a different light. Therefore, it is inevitable that in the process of change the question of the authority of scripture always arises. The appeal to certain texts hides a more fundamental way of understanding and applying scripture. The question ‘What is the right belief in our situation?’ invokes necessarily the question of the nature of the authority of scripture. The question of the nature of proper beliefs and the nature of the authority of scripture is not an additional question to those concerning evolution, women in office, racism, atomic weapons, historical research into the biblical history but runs through them and, as it were, lies behind them.⁷ In both Christianity and Islam holy scripture plays a decisive

⁵ Bureaucracy emerges in the making and application of rules for the organization of the church and liturgy; moralism is sometimes expressed in fixed codes of behaviour but more often in the moralization of faith.

⁶ The question of when doubt begins to affect groups plays a major role here: doubt arises in certain groups earlier than in others. Also very interesting is the doubt regarding the attitude of non-committal, as occurred in the Netherlands in the secession of 1834 (the *Afscheiding*) and the 1886 secession (the *Doleantie*, ‘Mourning Churches’) and with Karl Barth and the neo-Orthodox movement he initiated.

⁷ Several churches have dealt with reports on these questions, e.g. ‘Contemporary Questions Concerning the Sola Scriptura’, report of the European Area Committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Reformed World* 39 (1986), pp. 455–73.

role. Therefore, the question of proper belief is directly connected with how one uses scripture. Answers to the question 'Am I good believer?' and Luther's question 'How can I find a merciful God?' always include a view of the authority of scripture and its exegesis. Re-evaluating sources requires that one redefine one's approach to scripture. In what follows I will describe some strategies for this process.

The Bible and the Qur'an

As far as the reinterpretation of the sources is concerned, it is very important to recognize two differences between Christianity and Islam. The first is that the Qur'an has a different status in Islam to that of the Bible in Christianity. The Bible is revelation only in a certain sense: it witnesses to God's involvement with and revelation to people. It is itself part of the history of salvation. In Christian theological training the field of study of revelation included *historia revelationis*, i.e. not the history of the Bible but the history in which God became involved with people and therein revealed himself to them. The Bible is considered as belonging to this process. That the Bible is 'God-breathed' (*theopneustos*) is to say that the Spirit of God inspired the writers of the Bible.⁸ In Islam revelation means, on the one hand, that God sent prophets to all peoples – among whom Abraham, Moses and Isa are accorded a major place – and, on the other, that the Qur'an is the final, most authoritative and purely transmitted revelation. The Qur'an is the verbal revelation of God to Muhammad. God gave Muhammad revelations that were, shortly after his death, collected and bound in the Qur'an.⁹ In addition, in its exegesis of the Qur'an Islamic theology also looks to the *hadith*, the enormous collection of stories about what the Prophet and his immediate followers said and did. The measure of the authority of a tradition is determined on the basis of criteria such as the number of witnesses and the 'genealogy' of the origin of the story. Statements and actions of the Prophet and his immediate companions carry more weight in proportion to how close to the Prophet their origin lies and their confirmation by several witnesses.

Second, given the nature of the Qur'an – as revelations to the Prophet and a short history of origination – the Qur'an occupies a different place

⁸ The above is the view of Abraham Kuyper, among others. See Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (1898), tr. J. Hendrik De Vries (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, repr. 1980), pp. 413 ff. (§75). On inspiration, inerrancy and *theopneustos* see G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, tr. Jack B. Rogers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 139–94. The term *theopneustos* appears in 2 Tim. 3:16 ('All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for . . .').

⁹ According to the broadly accepted view – leaving aside the different reactions to investigation of possible (e.g. Aramaean) 'sources' of the Qur'an. Research into sources is in conflict with the orthodox Islamic view of the authority of the scripture.

in Islam than the Bible in Christianity. If we look at the structure of both religions, we should compare the Qur'an more with Christ than with the Bible. For Christians, whoever wants to know what God is like should begin with Christ; Muslims have to read revelation carefully to gain knowledge about God. For Christians, Christ is the centre of the Bible.¹⁰ The Qur'an does not have a centre in that sense but there are verses that are recited daily or during moments of crisis. The central place of the Qur'an emerges in how people refer to the Qur'an. Imams can excel both in their way of preaching as well as in the way they recite.

From a homogeneous to a pluralistic culture

The great majority of Muslims in Western Europe have come from a situation in which they were exposed to traditional forms of Islam in an almost religiously homogeneous homeland. The country of origin for Muslims differs according to the European country. British Muslims, for the most part, come from Pakistan and India. In Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany, most Muslims come from Turkey, Morocco, and further south from other North African countries. In the Netherlands there are also groups of Muslims from Surinam and India and from Indonesia, while everywhere there are asylum seekers and refugees from Bosnia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iran and Iraq and other countries. I will focus primarily on people who have come to north-west Europe from Turkey and Morocco as guest workers or through later marriages.

The first generation of guest workers did not come from the large cities but largely from villages in mountain areas and practised traditional forms of Islam. The word 'traditional' can easily lead to misunderstanding, for traditions undergo lengthy developments. By 'traditional' I mean that people have a certain view of Islam that is shared without dispute: they know what is and what is not allowed. Stated in more technical terms, a common interpretative schema with respect to the Qur'an is used. By 'interpretative schema' I mean the entirety of explicit and informal rules for explaining and applying the sacred text. No one reads the Qur'an (or the Bible) entirely free of presuppositions but always with a sense of what is central, of what, despite everything, is a side issue, and which examples should or should not be followed. Reflection on the authority of scripture is theology, but an interpretative schema is itself part of practical religion. It is, so to say, part of the religious culture: this is

¹⁰ This is not a sociological point but a theological one. If we want to understand how a tradition 'works', we must look not only at 'what people do with it' but also at those who pass on 'the tradition' and thus also what they 'receive' in their training: the tradition with its views on revelation.

how we do things. It thus operates on two levels: in the practical explanation of texts and in the explicit view of the scripture and the rules for applying the commandments. The practice and the theology are interwoven.

An interpretative schema is, by definition, culturally and religiously contextual. The religious life expresses itself concretely. In a country with an Islamic majority law and custom are strongly influenced by the Islamic tradition. Therefore, we cannot say that Moroccan society is strongly influenced by Islam, for Moroccan (or Pakistani) culture is part of Islam 'as such'. But we can say that Moroccan society is strongly influenced by the Islamic tradition. In other words, in the traditional culture there is an 'ingrown' interpretative schema that 'states' how a good Muslim lives and indicates the boundaries within which one must remain. It states which Qur'anic texts have more weight than others and which texts and *hadith* are applicable in which situations. In different parts of 'the' Islamic world there are divergent interpretative schemas. The four great law schools differ in the ways in which their interpretative schemas are developed further. There are thus regional differences and various orientations.

To be a good Muslim – in one's own eyes and in those of the community – one must therefore 'have' such an interpretative schema. It is part of one's identity. An interpretative scheme contains a whole repertoire of schemas for acting and ways of speaking that can be applied in various situations. Cultural anthropologists call this schema a repertoire.¹¹ In the tradition stories and, now, movie fragments play a major role. Stories about the great first Muslim, the Prophet, are examples of how to respond and what to say and do. If one's interpretative schema no longer suffices for the situation in which one lives and falls apart, one finds oneself in a crisis that affects one's faith and identity.

The first generation of guest workers and many of the Muslims who came to West European countries through marriage brought, of course, their 'Islam' and thus their interpretative schemas. In their new context they tried to follow these – what else could one expect? The imams naturally came from their own homeland and traditional imams – as is still the case – often came for only a few years to Western Europe and, either not knowing the local language at all or barely, they preached in the way to which they

¹¹ These repertoire schemas are borrowed from one's own tradition but also from other religious and cultural traditions. It is because of this that questions of bricolage and syncretism arise. See André F. Droogers, 'Changing Culture and the Missiological Mission', in Inus Daneel et al. (eds), *Fullness of Life for All: Challenges for Mission in Early 21st Century*, Festschrift Jerald D. Gort (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 59–72; 'The Individualisation of Religious Experience' and 'Syncretism', in Julio de Santa Ana (ed.), *Religions Today: Their Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), resp. pp. 233–47 and pp. 248–57.

were accustomed. Coming from a strongly homogeneous Islamic culture, they were and are not used to the pluralistic context of Muslims in Europe now and are not used to the situation of belonging to a minority – which a number of them experience as threatening.

Here we encounter the distinction between traditional and fundamentalist. In a homogeneous traditional culture fundamentalism does not emerge – as we will see more extensively below. Many Muslims who live within the Islamic communities in Western Europe are not fundamentalists but very traditional. How traditional they are depends, of course, on the extent to which they have become integrated and have jobs in which they actively work together with people from the general population. I will give two examples of this.

If one asks a very traditional Muslim who has been trained theologically in his home country and has had little contact with those of other faiths what he knows of Judaism, the answer can be that he has studied thoroughly what the Qur'an says about Jews – which is not so terribly different from what most orthodox ministers in the past usually gave as answer to that question: we Christians read the Old Testament, so we understand Judaism (even though there has been no temple since 70 CE). That answer is completely traditional and does not have to be fundamentalist. The second example is more complicated. A number of years ago an imam in Rotterdam called homosexuality abnormal: he warned vehemently against it. Is that traditional or fundamentalist? Some imams have a fiery style of preaching, but strong statements do not in themselves indicate fundamentalism. Views with which quite a number of native Dutch people (and many Muslims) are in wholehearted agreement – such as that it is better not to be born than to live as a homosexual – can also derive from the subculture of one's homeland and, by otherwise friendly people, be proclaimed with fervour. By the way, there are more Christian pastors who think that way than one would think. The situation from which many Islamic guest workers and refugees come is thoroughly traditional. But they then need to adapt to the new situation and their trusted interpretative schema begins to crumble.

The transition to a pluralistic culture

Both the transition to a different and certainly pluralistic culture as well as cultural developments require that adherents of a tradition develop that tradition. Radical changes place the old interpretative schema in question. There are always customs that one cannot observe in a different situation. Muslims arriving from mountainous areas in Morocco, Turkey and other countries are confronted with a modern, secular, individualistic and

pluralistic culture and are faced with a number of new questions. When may a Muslim living near the Arctic Circle eat if Ramadan is at the end of June? May a Muslim drink contrast fluid in a hospital for tests during Ramadan – for some this is a new question, and they will not take the fluid. Cultural, climatic and technological changes demand immense effort to reinterpret and extend the application of Islamic laws. As stated above, if too many questions emerge at the same time, the obviousness of the traditional interpretative schema as a whole disappears. Therefore, one must distinguish between primary and secondary issues. Even the principles of ethics and *fiqh* must be rethought.

In traditional Islam one must then distinguish between what the contextual form is and what Islam proper is. The question of 'pure Islam' is unavoidable. A difference should thus be made between what can be cast aside, if necessary, and that which needs to be retained – the distinction, for example, between Arabic or Moroccan culture and 'pure' Islam. One can cast something aside only if it is judged to be a historically determined form of Islam or even a distorted form of it. A feminist theologian would, just like her Christian sisters, say that at the beginning of the tradition women were much more independent than in later, traditional Islamic culture.

In this reconstruction of Islam different groups choose different strategies and they view the heart of Islam in different ways. For a comparison with Christianity we can return for a moment to the time of the Reformation. For the Frisian Reformer Menno Simons, the Sermon on the Mount belonged to the heart of Christianity. For Martin Luther, Paul's accentuation of free grace, without the need to be a good person, was the core. John Calvin placed somewhat more emphasis than Luther on the consequences of the Gospel for social life. The Roman Catholic Church strongly resisted the Reformers and the Inquisition persecuted them. Many were killed and great numbers of people had to flee. A fundamental renewal is always accompanied by differences in opinion and disputes within the religious community itself in which the struggle for power and political consequences play a role. Radical Muslims went on the attack in New York and Jakarta, London and Istanbul.

It is also significant what Luther indicated as the heart of the Gospel: justification not through good works (and observation of the law) but by the loving grace that is accepted in faith. I think that this is one of the central biblical insights, but for Luther it became the centre of the Christian faith as a whole. Viewed from the perspective of his historical situation, we can understand that. The indulgence trade was booming: people could buy forgiveness as a way of atoning for serious sins. Luther had a deep sense of sin. Against this background we can understand that the justification of the sinner was for him the pure gospel. In general, it is true that that which is viewed at a certain time as the heart, itself stands in a certain context. In that

context, it seems to me, such can be the order of the day. The view of what the heart of something is is itself contextual (but not, therefore, necessarily arbitrary!).¹²

On this basis we can understand that in the process of change in Islam in Western Europe different emphases arise. Because we have to do here with a process involving millions of Muslims, it has repercussions in the Islamic world as a whole and, conversely, the resistance of Islamic groups to 'the West' plays a major role. Via satellite TV and the internet Western Muslims can keep in contact with Arabic imams and, conversely, Arabic Muslims with modernization, democratization and globalization.

Divergent strategies

With these building blocks we can now distinguish a number of 'kinds' of strategies with which people enter the process of renewal. We will take as the starting situation traditional Muslims who, in Amsterdam and Berlin, generally live the same way that they did in Morocco, Turkey, Sudan and other Islamic countries.

Reinterpretation in the traditional group

The least striking group are those Muslims who look at the changes one by one, as it were, and judge them in the classical way. They do not strive for any comprehensive reformation but deal with the moral questions that confront them in the usual way. They appeal to verses from the Qur'an, to the *hadith*, to the *shari'ah* and further jurisprudence – almost like rabbis in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London do with the *halachah*.

This indicates that in the Islam of Western Europe a kind of 'moderate orthodoxy' has arisen from the conservative, traditional first generation, a 'moderate orthodoxy' that has consciously adapted to Western society without succumbing to secularization. This group will reflect, on the basis of the principles of the *fiqh*, on the questions of medical ethics, the economy and family law in the same way that these play a role in Western society. In addition, this group will reflect on its own attitude towards those of different faiths and 'unbelievers'. For the 'purifying' Islam of customs determined by the situation in their home countries, they will rely on principles that they see as the heart.

¹² See my *De Schrift alleen?*, p. 261; in Christian theology it is also true that God's acts and the person of Jesus constitute the church and not the texts of the Bible from cover to cover. It seems to me that Islam can also point to main themes in the Qur'an that are central and can serve as starting points for further reflection; in fact the whole of the hermeneutics of *tafsir* and *fiqh* proceeds on such central ideas.

Within this more moderate approach all kinds of variations are of course possible. To give one example: Tariq Ramadan is a proponent of a clear, committed Islam that would use the room of the Western freedom of religion and society for erecting an Islamic 'pillar' in which people can give form to Islamic life. On the basis of their own beliefs, Western Muslims can contribute to the Western debate on values and the direction of society.¹³

A liberal group

Among Muslims there are naturally also many who do not pay very much attention to the religious authorities and hold to their own views. That obtains for some non-orthodox Islamic organizations that are also viewed by orthodox organizations as not truly Islamic. Just as there are many non-practising 'Christians' in the Christian community – whether or not they are members of a church – so there are also many Muslims who decide for themselves which rituals they are going to observe and which they are not. Insofar as people see themselves as good Muslims, they will appeal to what is considered to be the heart of the faith.

The disappearance of the old interpretative schema offers them the opportunity to go their own way. One can speak here of a radical reconstruction of Islam in the sense of a much more individualistic participation in Islam, sometimes less personal religious sense and much less of a strict adherence to the *shari'ah*. Olivier Roy and others point out, moreover, that in Western countries often all people who come from Islamic countries are incorrectly seen as Muslims. In many cases Muslims who have lost their faith will say they are Muslim when asked, because falling away from the faith is seen within their broader community as the worst thing one can do and can result in all relations with that person being broken off.¹⁴

Fundamentalism

Fundamentalist movements solve the crisis of their old interpretative schema in another way. These movements receive the most attention in the media and the public debate. Characteristic of fundamentalism is the following: (1) a number of insights and rules are seen as absolute truth and (2) on the basis of these fundamentals the rest of Islam is interpreted – other lines

¹³ Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 224–8, *passim*. Roy, *Globalised Islam* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 92ff., describes the intervention of governments in Islamic countries in 'their' Islam as 'conservative re-Islamisation'.

¹⁴ That is why Muslims who have lost their faith are not even included in official statistics – that is not something one says.

of thought are left out of consideration; (3) other groups are resisted via modern means and all compromise is rejected.¹⁵

The term fundamentalism is derived from a Christian movement in the United States around the year 1900 that, over against what was considered 'liberal', listed a few 'fundamentals' of the faith and defended them forcefully. Belonging to these 'fundamentals' is the literal authority of the Bible (from cover to cover). In fact, this was inconsistent, because through the 'fundamentals' an interpretative schema was established that obtained for the appeal to scripture. With this, the breadth of the scriptural witness was cut off and the Reformation rule 'Exegete scripture by scripture' was rejected. Fundamentalism thus combined a seriousness about the faith with a selective appeal to scripture. At the same time, it strongly resisted liberal tendencies and moderate orthodoxies that compromised themselves by adapting to the enemy.

Just like Christian fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalism also searches for the heart of its faith. Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an is not a collection of books which have a long history but, as stated above, a collection of direct revelatory sayings by God to the Prophet. Islamic fundamentalism can thus attempt to read the Qur'an from cover to cover more emphatically than Christians do the Bible. In the desire for a pure Islam, they attempt to get behind the historical development of Islam to Islam in its original state.¹⁶ The difficulty here is, of course, that one cuts away not only extra growth and time-bound forms but also wise and necessary later developments. No one can simply return to the situation of 632 CE. Because one must adapt to the new context, a number of insights and rules must be selected which together form a practical interpretative schema. In fact, it is not the whole Qur'an and *hadith* that is followed, but only a number of fundamental truths are proposed and strongly defended. One thus presents a new interpretative schema and certain lines are drawn through the Qur'an. From the perspective of Islamic 'moderate orthodoxy', these lines will be judged as one-sided and selective and they will be rejected for wanting to 'ignore' the later *hadith* and tradition. The fundamentalist ideas of scriptural authority ('back to the Qur'an' and 'from cover to cover') are in conflict with the notion of pointing

¹⁵ Heinrich Schäfer cites two characteristics of fundamentalism: absolute truth claims (without any self-criticism) and instrumental rationality, i.e. the use of modern technology and means of communication to promote their own way of thinking and to combat others. 'Fundamentalism', in Julio de Santa Ana (ed.), *Religions Today*, pp. 279–80. Fundamentalism is not traditional but a modern development.

¹⁶ Cf. Roy, *Globalised Islam*, pp. 155, 265, *passim*. For that reason there is also fundamentalist resistance to an Islamic government with different views.

to a few 'fundamentals' – one attempts to avoid nuances and the early history of Islam. The fundamentalist struggle tolerates few nuances.

In conclusion, we can say that fundamentalists solve the problem of the traditional interpretative framework by forcefully bringing to the fore a number of religious insights (the pure, the real) and defending them. They themselves create a limited but clear and practical interpretative schema to which everyone is to adhere on penalty of being ostracized from the fundamentalist group to which they belong.

Political and radical Islam

Political Islam or Islamism is a radicalization of the fundamentalist movements such as salafism. Salafism recognizes only the Qur'an, the *hadith* and the *shari'ah* as sources of law. It wants to introduce pure Islam. Thus in Lebanon the Shi'ite party, Hezbollah, has fought to introduce Islamic jurisprudence if the majority of the population wishes it. In a number of Islamic states Islamic parties are in power.

Criticism of the privatization of religion is more widespread among Muslims than among Christians: the Arabic word *islam* means surrender in faith and obedience in one's whole life – it is the equivalent of 'living faith'. The primary wish is that the laws of the country in which they live be in line with the Islamic law, *fiqh* – even though the distinction between the state and the leadership of the Islamic faith community is widespread.¹⁷

Radical Islam goes a step further yet and turns its disapproval of Western powers and unbelievers into an actual battle. Radical salafists want to engage in an actual war against unbelief and disobedience to God. Olivier Roy prefers the term jihadists.¹⁸ The *jihad* and the defence of Islamic territory are primary. Hezbollah in Lebanon had, in its period of armed resistance to Israeli occupation, explained *jihad* in such a way that a Muslim first had to struggle against himself – traditionally the greater *jihad* – and thus could progress so far that he could give his life if the leadership commanded

¹⁷ Cf. among others, Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, pp. 34, 36. A striking example of the desire to live one's own life in accordance with Islamic law was the request by the Islamic Institute for Civil Justice in Ontario in 2004 to allow arbitration by an Islamic court in family matters instead of the regular courts – a right also accorded to the Jewish Beis Din. On 15 Feb. 2006 the arbitration law of Ontario was adjusted with further conditions for constituting a valid arbitration. Cf. the report on the question by Marion Boyd, *Dispute Resolution in Family Law: Protecting Choice, Promoting Inclusion* (Dec. 2005); the report is available on the website of the Attorney General of the Province of Ontario, Canada.

¹⁸ Roy, *Globalised Islam*, p. 234.

it.¹⁹ Traditionally, it is precisely the other way around. The lesser *jihad* is armed struggle for the sake of Islam and the greater *jihad* the struggle against oneself – as in the gospel the one who conquers himself is stronger than the one who occupies a city. Hezbollah turned this around: whoever conquers himself and empties himself can come so far that he can give his life on command in an attack on the enemy. The comparison with kamikaze pilots who through Zen meditation were emptied of their selves and gave their lives for Japan is interesting.²⁰ Apparently, people find the meaning for their existence in sacrificing themselves for the nation or the national religion – that is also a form of finding one's identity. What is striking in Western Europe is that a number of Muslim youths born in Europe and converted youths are attracted to radical Islam. That can perhaps be understood on the basis of the need to have a grand purpose in life in a context in which meaning has become a question of personal taste. Do totalitarian regimes not emerge in times of crisis and humiliation?

Moderate orthodoxy, liberalism, fundamentalism and islamism

Muslims who have come to Western Europe from a traditional Islamic culture thus have a number of options for dealing with their way of reading and applying the Qur'an. Muslims are faced with the same dilemmas as Christians. We have distinguished four possibilities: moderate orthodoxy, liberalism, fundamentalism and radicalism. Those are the possibilities, even though there are different emphases within each of these options.

To me it seems very important to distinguish between traditional Islam and moderate orthodoxy on the one hand and fundamentalism on the other. This distinction is often ignored in policy-making and news reports. What also plays a role here is that also in 'moderate orthodoxy' many young people speak of themselves as Muslim (or Christian) quite openly. In reports of research into the resurgence of religion and desecularization this phenomenon is explained from the perspective of the internationalization of society, which makes the national state much less important. People are turning less to their country of residence for construing their identity and more to religion and ethnicity.²¹ This can lead to religious groups being

¹⁹ Joseph Elie Alagha, 'The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program' (doctoral dissertation, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 10 Feb. 2006), p. 162. He refers to *Al-'Ahd* (10 Shawwal 1405 AH/28 June 1985), p. 9.

²⁰ Cf. Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Weatherhill, 1997).

²¹ See, for example, Feliciano V. Carino, 'The Dynamics of Political Migrations as a Challenge to Religious Life', in Julio de Santa Ana (ed.), *Religions Today*, p. 77; Heinrich Schäfer, 'New Wars and Religious Identity Politics', *ibid.*, pp. 93–4.

more self-conscious about their identity. A good example of this is the increase in young Islamic women wearing headscarves in the Netherlands. This is due partly to a greater need to show that they identify themselves with Islam. It will often be the case that parents, for traditional reasons, want their daughters to wear headscarves and that young women themselves do it to stand up for their faith. The latter will most likely be a matter of self-conscious 'moderate orthodoxy' and not one of fundamentalism. These two should not be confused: there is a large group of consciously modern 'moderately orthodox' young Muslims.

Traditionalism can turn into fundamentalism. The tighter line of (what Roy calls) neo-fundamentalist movements (in their great variety) requires further explanation. Research into the development of religion in Western culture points to two tendencies. As a result of modernization – increasing complexity, the inability to define modern society in a clear and convenient way, the fast developments, the many changes and pluralization – the responsibility of the individual for her own life has increased dramatically. The term 'risk society' has emerged: one must make one's own choices – education, job or career, partner and one can introduce change into these things only at great emotional cost, to say nothing of the other costs involved. People react differently. At one extreme of the spectrum are the seekers and at the other those who choose simplicity. Among Christians the seekers are those who give their own interpretation of Christian faith and do not pay much attention to church authorities. They either become liberals or remain within 'moderate orthodoxy'. Others seek their certainty in tighter movements with a clearly delineated faith and morality. This can explain both the rise of the evangelical movements and the attraction of these for young people as well as the quickly spreading pentecostal movement in parts of the world with few fixed structures and great poverty.²²

Among Muslims, there is also much resistance here to Western domination. The secularization in Western Europe does not help. Via television one gets the impression that Westerners live in a way that can only disgust the good Muslim. 'Never you see a normal family, always adultery, cunning and deception', as a publicist expressed it in conversation. The image that people in Turkey and elsewhere receive from Western European television is indeed

²² André F. Droogers lists a series of circumstances which could have contributed to the quick spread of (very divergent) Pentecostal movements such as modernization, urbanization, individualization, and cites characteristics which attract people, such as a close network, clarity regarding lifestyle (cf. the emphasis on conversion), emphasis on the help of the Holy Spirit, and, in principle, a horizontal organization. Cf. Droogers, 'Pentecostalism', in Julio de Santa Ana (ed.), *Religions Today*, pp. 258–70.

not very uplifting. Within Islam in the West a renewed 'moderate orthodoxy' is arising that takes up modern issues from the perspective of Islam but wants to keep its distance from Western aberrations.²³

Islamic fundamentalism rejects this secularized, liberal culture entirely. Fundamentalism 'is reactive', the authors of *Strong Religion* write: it reacts to the erosion of religion, to secularization and relativism.²⁴ Fundamentalists are combative and refuse compromises. It is important to see the difference from 'moderate orthodoxy'. The more traditional Muslims live in accordance with the words with which they greet one another (and often others): 'salam aleikum' (Peace be with you). They reject the martial form of *jihad*. In contrast, fundamentalists stand up against Western power and fight for pure Islam. They direct themselves primarily against the USA and Israel. For the Lebanese these are the Great and the Lesser Satans – one cannot express it any more strongly than that.²⁵ On the basis of their broad research into fundamentalist movements Almond, Appleby and Sivan say that typically strong fundamentalists are recruited from more remote areas, poorer parts of the large cities, less educated groups and people who are not benefiting from social and economic developments.²⁶ This fundamentalism can turn into islamism and radicalism.

Conclusion

We can thus understand that in a situation in which Islam must be reinterpreted a number of different approaches emerge which we call traditional/moderately orthodox, liberal, fundamentalist and radical.

²³ An example in the Netherlands is the Society of Muslim Youth in Amsterdam (Stichting Moslim Jongeren Amsterdam), established in Nov. 2005. It is possible that Tariq Ramadan also fits into this movement. See also Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), p. 150: 'the emergent Islam that many second- and third-generation Muslims are constructing in Europe and that shape their lives will vary from the purely privatised faith of the West, on the one hand, and the sometimes culturally determined and theologically narrow brand of Islam of some first-generation believers' – although I think that it misses a point to call very traditional forms of Islam 'narrow'.

²⁴ Almond et al., *Strong Religion*, p. 93. This book is based on very broad research into fundamentalist movements throughout the world. It indicates a large number of communal aspects to fundamentalists, such as authoritarian and charismatic leadership, (select but) infallible fundamental insights and rules, a sense of themselves as the chosen elect, strict limits and often a view of the great reward in the afterlife, pp. 90–115.

²⁵ Alagha, 'Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology', pp. 56–7.

²⁶ Almond et al., *Strong Religion*, p. 130.

It is extremely important to realize that the majority of Muslims in Western Europe are developing, on the one hand, in the direction of more individualist views of Islam and, on the other, in that of a more self-conscious Islamic 'moderate orthodoxy'. Traditional imams who preach with 'Arabic' fervour are not necessarily fundamentalist or radical. If they resist Western depravity and oppose equal rights for homosexuals, they are (like many orthodox Christian preachers) more traditional than fundamentalist. I think that in the press, moreover, the lack of mastery of European languages is often neglected: media translations often states something other than what is intended. Sometimes what is intended is not put well or people say what they would say in remote areas in Turkey and Morocco. That is more traditional than fundamentalist.

The need to revise the traditional interpretative scheme leads inevitably to uncertainty and differences in opinion. One may wish the Muslim community 'salam aleikum' – that this contextual reinterpretation of Islam by means of a contextual interpretative scheme will cause as little friction and crooked growth as possible among Muslim young people and as little disappointment among parents.

The different options in the inescapable renewal of Islam in the West can be sufficiently explained as the continuation of an existing line (traditionalism, moderate orthodoxy), individualisation (liberal Islam), the choice for clarity and standing up for one's identity (fundamentalism) and combativeness (radical Islam). I will conclude with the remark that, for a responsible continuation of the Islamic tradition in the Western setting, it is necessary that Muslim theologians from the local-national Islamic communities themselves be trained to develop their tradition further within the Western context.